

THE AMERICAN NATIONAL PREACHER.

No. 3, Vol. XXII.

MARCH, 1848.

Whole No. 355.

SERMON CCCCLXX.

BY REV. GEO. W. BETHUNE, D.D.,

MINISTER OF THE THIRD REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

THE DOCTRINE OF EVANGELICAL SUBMISSION.

For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.—ROMANS, x. 3.

A TRUE Christian earnestly desires the salvation of his fellow sinners; for God in Christ is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter, iii. 9.); he is particularly anxious for the salvation of those to whom he is bound by natural ties; for God, in providence, has commended them to his particular regard; and when he sees those thus dear to him, not careless of their salvation, but zealously striving after it, though by wrong methods and in a wrong direction, his sympathies must be yet more deeply interested, and his best endeavors be used to set them right.

Such was the spirit of the apostle toward the Jews. They were his fellow sinners, and, therefore, in need of the same salvation with himself. They were his countrymen, his kindred, and, therefore, dear to him above every other people; so, notwithstanding, that the Gospel he preached, and had demonstrated in the former part of his epistle, utterly condemned all who rejected it, he vehemently protests that his "heart's prayer and desire to God for Israel is, that they may be saved:" and this the more, because he saw, that, in their ardent attachment to the Mosaic system they were honest, though mistaken: "I bear them record (or witness) that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Then in the text, he points out their error, the occasion of it, and their duty:

"They, being ignorant of God's righteousness (this was the occasion of their error), and going about to establish their own righteousness (this was the error itself), have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God," (which was their duty).

Here are several things for us to note, though we have not time to dwell upon them :

1st. An earnest desire of salvation is in itself right, and, therefore, to be encouraged. The apostle whose "heart's prayer and desire was that Israel might be saved," is very far from blaming them for endeavoring to obtain salvation. What he desired for them, they surely might desire for themselves. Their fault lay in not seeking salvation by the right method.

2dly. Ignorance of true religion will not excuse men for the neglect of it, but, when voluntary (as was the case with the Jews), is itself guilt. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost (rather, them that *destroy themselves*), in whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them which believe not." (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.)

3dly. The only basis upon which we can be saved, is righteousness ;—the righteousness which God requires by his holy law. In this, the apostle and the Jews were agreed. Salvation must be consistent with the justice of Him, who "will by no means clear the guilty."

4thly. All hope of establishing our own righteousness is taken away, and the attempt forbidden by the Gospel of God in Christ. It was through ignorance of God's righteousness, that the Jews went about to establish their own.

And 5thly. The true method of righteousness is submission to the righteousness of God.

The aim of our discourse is, in reliance upon divine help, (which we invoke from God the Father through God the Son, by God the Holy Ghost, to whom be equal and undivided praise, Amen!) to set forth the Christian doctrine of

SUBMISSION TO GOD.

The meaning of submission is plain enough. It is a yielding of ourselves to the authority, and an acquiescence in the will of another.

If we inquire,

FIRST: TO WHOM WE ARE TO SUBMIT:

we shall be prepared to learn,

SECONDLY: IN WHAT THE SUBMISSION CONSISTS.

FIRST: TO WHOM ARE WE TO SUBMIT?

To God. This is our natural duty, as creatures. God, who made us and preserves us, has a supreme right to govern, direct, and dispose of us, according to his own will.

His government must be infinitely perfect, because he is infinitely perfect in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Therefore should his own infinite excellence, our dependence upon him, responsibility at his judgment, gratitude for his benefits, and desire of our own good, lead us to obey, trust, love, and glorify him, with all our hearts, and minds, and lives. To

resist him, is to do wrong, and encounter certain misery; to submit to him, is to do right, and be certainly blessed.

But can we thus perfectly submit ourselves to God? His authority demands our entire obedience. Have we thus obeyed him? We have not, for his word declares us all to be sinners. Can we, by any obedience in the present or future, make up for the dishonor we have done to his holy law? We cannot, for our present duty requires all our powers, and could not, even if it were perfectly performed, be applied to make up for our past defects. Are we able now to serve and glorify him? Alas! our whole nature has become corrupt, blind, and dead in sin, because of our departure from him.

It is, therefore, impossible for us, in our natural state, to render a full and true submission to God. Even should we acknowledge his justice, we could not satisfy it; should we acquiesce in the holiness of his law, we could not fulfill it; nor may we, while obnoxious to his burning wrath, delight ourselves in his love. But can a sinner, so lost, blind, and corrupt, acknowledge with his heart the justice of God, and acquiesce in the will of God, when that justice only and utterly condemns him? It may be said that he ought to do so; but *can* he? Will not the same disposition, which urges him to commit sin, make him a rebel against the holy authority that punishes sin? Is it possible for him to exhibit such high conformity with the divine will that punishes, while he remains a rebel against the divine will that commands? It is clear that he is as incompetent to *submit*, as he is to obey. Either would manifest a holy spirit; and for either, he needs a new life from God.

But God, in the manifold wisdom and abounding riches of his goodness, has provided for all the exigencies of our case, and he now requires our submission, not to God immediately, but to

God in *Christ*. Intent upon the only end worthy of the divine mind, God proposed for Himself a far richer glory, than He could receive either from the obedience of unfallen man, or from the punishment of man when fallen, in the salvation of sinners from the punishment and power of sin. This He accomplishes by a new scheme, which, while it in nowise contradicts the principle of His former dealings with man, admits and justifies the restoration of sinners to favor and life. He ceases not to be just, but He extends mercy; and while He pardons the lost, He renews them to holiness.

He commits the necessary work to the Eternal Son; the Eternal Son bows to the will of God, in God the Father; and His susception of the office is consummated by a divine covenant.

It was necessary, that the divine law given to man and broken by him, should be magnified and its holy sanctions of penalty and reward perfectly maintained, yet the sinner, who accepts the grace, though guilty in himself, be pardoned, and, though without

righteousness of his own, be crowned with life, the reward of perfect obedience. So, the Son of God came at the fulness of time, into *our world*, the theatre of our responsibility; in *our nature*, the nature which had sinned, having assumed to His divine person a human soul and human body, so that He was very man as He was very God; and became voluntarily *subject* to the *law binding upon us*. Being thus found in fashion as a man, and in the form of a servant, He honored the law by an obedience infinite as to its merit, because of the divinity that dwelt in Him; and completed the work of righteousness, by voluntarily submitting Himself on the cross to that penalty of death, which His people must have suffered, had He not died for them; the shedding of his blood, because it was the blood which the Eternal Son of God had made His own, being an infinitely richer satisfaction to the divine vengeance against sin, than the eternal sufferings of a world of transgressors.

It is necessary, that the sinner, in order to his enjoyment of the divine favor, and the blessedness which flows from it, should be renewed into the holy disposition he has lost by sin, and receive strength to obey the will of God with his whole heart. So the Eternal Son, now the IMMANUEL, God incarnate, having finished His work of righteousness which justifies the pardon of the sinner that believes in His name, ascends up on high, and, according to the covenant He had on His part fulfilled, asks and receives the Holy Spirit, by whose energies He draws the sinner to Himself, enlightens his understanding, converts his heart and strengthens him with divine grace for a new life, which is carried on gradually, but surely, unto a perfect holiness in the consummation of heaven.

It is necessary that, when the Eternal Son, the Mediator between God and man, shall have accomplished the full salvation of all who believe from the guilt and the power of sin, He should descend again to make his final vindication of the justice of God in the judgment and punishment of all sinful men, who reject the salvation which he graciously offers them by his Word and Spirit.

This is the dispensation of God in Christ; the dispensation under which we are required to submit ourselves to God. All our transactions with God must now be through Christ. To approach God, except through the Mediator, is sin, rebellion, and defiance.

SECONDLY: IN WHAT DOES TRUE SUBMISSION CONSIST?

I. In seeking the salvation of our souls.

God in making us moral creatures, has committed our well-being to our own care, subject always to his righteous providence. He delights in the happiness of men. He created man happy. He has said, and confirmed it by an oath, that He has "no pleasure in the death even of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live." But, since we are sinners, and there can be no happiness for us, while we remain in our sins and under condemnation, it is our duty to seek our lost well-being in that salvation

which delivers from the power of sin and the wrath of God against the sinner, because, in thus seeking the salvation of our souls, we return toward that duty which we abandoned, when we plunged our souls in sin and ruin.

Does any one say here, that we should seek salvation only for the glory of God, and not with any reference to our own well-being? We answer: The desire of salvation (which involves our well-being) is itself a duty; and how we can desire our highest well-being, for the glory of God, and yet not desire the well-being itself, no wit of man can distinguish. Certainly, the Bible does not even point at such a transcendental nicety. On the contrary, its question is: "Why will ye die?" and the controversy of our Saviour with us, is: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." After God had said: "In the day thou eatest thereof (the forbidden tree) thou shalt surely die," man sinned, not only in eating, but in *throwing away his life*. When our Saviour says: "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" He surely teaches that a neglect of our eternal being is itself a crime. Therefore, now that we have an opportunity of eternal life, it is our duty to seek the everlasting welfare of our souls; and they, who pronounced such seeking sin, pervert the clear word of God, and, like cruel wolves, worry the tender lambs of Christ's flock. When did the Good Shepherd ever so speak to any soul that cried: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on me!"

The salvation of sinners is the great glory which God proposes to himself in Christ. How much He delights to save sinners, is seen in the infinite provision He has made for it by the gift, humiliation, obedience, and death of his Son, and the mission of his Holy Spirit through Christ. When, therefore, we submit ourselves to God in Christ, the salvation of sinners should be the great aim of our hearts; and, as our own souls are first within our reach, and we can use no proper means to save others until we are Christians ourselves, so the salvation of *our* own souls should be our first purpose. We, in so doing, consent to God, and work with God. Thus says the Apostle: "Work out (and working out includes beginning to work) *your own salvation* with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his *own good pleasure*." The salvation of our souls is God's own good pleasure, and, therefore, our great duty is to seek it.

Besides, we are insufficient for anything of ourselves. "Without me, ye can do nothing," says the Master. Until we receive the grace of God, which is only through Christ, we remain "dead in sin," "without strength;" but when we receive grace from Christ so as to strengthen us for any duty, *our salvation is begun*. For it is *His* work to "save us *from* our sins," and "to *give repentance* with the remission of sins." It is, therefore, our duty to seek salvation, that we may be qualified for our duty to our own souls and to others. They, who suppose that they submitted to

God, in any proper sense, before they trusted in Christ, manifestly, and, except they repent, fatally err; for they claim to have accomplished for themselves, without Christ, the very work, which Christ came to accomplish in them, the subjection of their hearts to God.

It were, moreover, gross impiety to think, that now, since God has appointed Christ to reign for Him, we can submit to God except by faith in "that MAN whom He hath ordained." The sum of the Gospel is this: God has provided in Christ, and only in Christ, all that is necessary for our salvation, a new heart, a right spirit, pardon, strength, sanctification, complete redemption; and what he requires of us is, to believe in Christ, or accept Christ as our *Saviour*, for then and then only, shall we find in Him, a new heart, a right spirit, pardon, strength, sanctification, and complete redemption. Until we believe in Christ as our *Saviour*, we can have nothing but guilt and do nothing but sin.

2. Submission to God in Christ implies, An adoring acquiescence in the plan of salvation.

This is what the apostle means by "submitting unto the righteousness of God," for he adds immediately, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;" that is: The righteousness of Christ is the sole and sufficient ground of the believer's justification. Now from what we have seen of the plan of salvation in Christ, acquiescence in it requires:

(a) *A conviction of our utter sinfulness in the sight of God*, which rendered such a salvation necessary. Until we are sensible of our sins, we can have no part in the Saviour of sinners, who came to seek and to save the lost. There is, indeed, no genuine conviction of sin except from Christ. The law condemns, but the cross convinces. It is, then, from the sufferings of Christ, the Surety of sinners, that we learn from God how great an evil sin is in His sight, and how great that sin is which is committed against One so good, so holy, and so merciful.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
When they operate alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon,
That can melt the heart of stone."

How then can we truly repent until we look to Christ. "If I be lifted up from the earth," saith the Saviour, "I will draw all men unto me."

(b) *An acknowledgment of the justice of God in our condemnation to eternal death*, from which Christ died to redeem us. God has declared His condemnation of us, and showed us that it was no arbitrary act, by providing so great a ransom in the substituted sufferings of His Son. Except, therefore, we believe our condemnation to be justly deserved, nay, that but for Christ, we must forever have lain under the wrath of God, we cannot avail ourselves of the salvation of Christ, nor submit ourselves to the righteous-

ness of God. Christ will be precious to us, just as we see ourselves to be guilty, and avail ourselves of his proffered salvation. Yet this does not make it necessary that we should be willing to perish. It is not God's will that we should perish; on the contrary, He has opened for us a way of escape; and, therefore, we should not be willing to remain under His condemnation, but should escape by the way He has opened. Indeed, the very thought is horrible, for condemnation involves not only suffering from the loss of God's favor, but extreme depravity from the absence of God's restraining and converting grace. Who that knows any thing of the excellence of God, could consent to be a damned spirit, cursing and blaspheming for ever with cursing and blaspheming fiends? An acknowledgment of the justice of God in our condemnation, is our duty; but, since Christ has come (and except from Christ we could never have derived strength for such an acknowledgment), a willingness to remain under condemnation, is, turn the matter as you will, a willingness to remain the enemy of God for ever. It is folly to say, that such a spirit could praise God even in torments. God never sends those who praise Him into torments. There is nothing but blaspheming in hell. Heaven is the only place for a praising spirit, after it has left the body. If you revolt from the consequences of the condemnation, you cannot be willing to remain condemned. Where in that book, which declares, that "God is not willing that any should perish," can you find such a dreadful requirement made of a poor trembling sinner who loves God's glory?

(c.) *A belief of the full sufficiency and the sufficiency alone, of Christ's righteousness for the justification of the sinner.* It is sufficient because God has appointed and accepted it; and because God in Christ wrought it out and declared "It is finished." It is the only sufficiency, because, "if righteousness could have come by the law," or in any other way, "Christ is dead in vain;" and because "God has set forth the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." What God has wrought out and declared sufficient; what God has appointed and accepted as sufficient, it were gross impiety to doubt, or to think of improving. Submission to God, therefore, requires a belief in his readiness to save. True submission is submission to God as he manifests himself; not to one attribute, but to all; to his mercy as well as his justice; his justice in saving by Christ, as well as his justice in condemning out of Christ. Submission to God without hope, is sin, because it is a denial of his righteousness in Christ. We must submit to His *salvation* by Christ, or we remain unsubmitive.

(d.) *A sense of our own inability and dependence upon the Holy*

Ghost for strength to work out our salvation. The positive assertions of the Scripture on this point, make it sufficiently clear; but the promise of the Holy Spirit "to work in us both to will and to do of God's good pleasure," makes it sin for us to attempt anything in our own strength. Yet this does not justify us in delaying, nor should it discourage us from attempting, the divine life; because the moment we attempt it, looking to God for help, the Spirit assists us; and we have no promise of his assistance, until we put forth our own endeavors. The man with the withered arm had no strength in it, but when he attempted to stretch it out in obedience to Christ, he received strength from Christ. It was not his own strength but Christ's, yet *he used it*. If we would have grace, we must exercise it. Submission to God without hope, because of our own inability to serve him, is sin; because, though convinced of our own weakness, we should attempt his service in a reliance upon the assistance of the Holy Ghost. If that were denied us, we should despair; but, since it is promised, our duty is to trust, and hope, and venture forward.

(e.) *Acceptance of salvation through the righteousness of God in Christ and by the grace of the Holy Ghost.* We put this last, not because it is least, or because anything should go before it, but as the sum of the whole truth. It has run through all we have said. Under the first covenant the command with the promise was "This do and thou shalt live." Under the Gospel the command with the promise is "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Belief in Christ sums up the evangelical duty, because all duty is now included by it, and consequent upon it. For to believe in Christ is, as we have seen, to acknowledge ourselves sinners, and justly condemned; to acknowledge ourselves corrupt and dead in sin; to desire salvation, not only from the punishment of sin, but also, by the grace of the Holy Ghost, from the power of sin; to see, with adoring gratitude, the sufficiency of Christ's righteousness, and of the Spirit's grace to save all who come unto God: and, therefore, acceptance of Christ as our Saviour, is submission to the will of God, in Christ. He commands us to believe, as plainly as when he commands to have no other gods before him. To *delay* this acceptance for a single moment; to suppose that we must or can do anything right before we accept it, is to reject the grace of God. We must, it is true, not think of being saved in our sins. There is no such salvation. But we must accept salvation *from* sin, while we accept pardon *of* sin. If we open our hearts to a justifying Saviour we shall receive with him a sanctifying Spirit. There are those who will tell you, that you must submit to God, and, after you have thus given up your sins, Christ will manifest himself to you as your Saviour. But the word of God says nothing of the kind. Jesus never said so. The apostles never said so. There never was a soul truly converted to God by such a doctrine. It is not the gospel. The word of God

in Christ is: "Believe in Christ;" "Submit yourselves to the righteousness of God," even to Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness," and he will, by his Holy Spirit, enable you to give up your sins, and God will accept your heart, not in its native vileness, but washed by the blood, and covered by the righteousness of Jesus. This is not *selfishness*, though it is *self-love*, for it is such a love as a man ought to have for his soul, and it is compliance with God's method for our glorifying of his name.

INFERENCES.

1. Great care should be used, when addressing our fellow sinners, to interpose Christ as the Mediator between them and God. To exhort them "to submit to God," and not show them that they must submit to God in Christ, as their Saviour; to bid them "give up their hearts to God," and not insist that those hearts must be put, by faith, in Christ's hands, is not Christian teaching. A Jew, or Mohammedan, or Deist, could teach as well. It is "the preaching of the Cross," which is "the wisdom of God and the power of God to salvation." This is the "faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

It is vain to say, that the sinner knows the Gospel, and that, therefore, there is no need of such particularity. "The offence of the cross" is the great cause of the sinner's refusal to submit unto God. Neither can there be any Gospel, except Christ be first, Christ last, Christ throughout, Christ all and in all. Besides, there are not wanting false teachers, even in our day, who purposely keep Christ out of sight, until they have insisted upon certain things preliminary to faith in Christ. A most dangerous error! The Apostle Paul found such in the church of Galatia, and what does he say? "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him, who first called you in the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel; which is not another, but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 6, 7, 8.) Is not that another gospel, which keeps back Christ, or puts anything before faith in his precious name, as our Saviour and Deliverer?

2. All those who suppose that they have submitted unto God, without *at the same time* desiring and accepting salvation from God through Christ, are under a delusion, a most unchristian, baneful delusion; a delusion dishonorable to God and full of vanity and self righteousness. No true peace can come from such a source. Peace is only found in submission to Christ as the Saviour.

3. Inquiring souls have the greatest encouragement to believe in Christ for their own salvation. Christ invites them to salvation,

bids them seek, ask, knock, strive for it. God waits to be gracious, for He promises in Christ, whom He hath sent, salvation to all who desire pardon and a new heart. It is your duty to seek salvation for God's glory, but you are also commanded to seek it that you may live. Only be desirous of salvation from *sin* as well as from hell, of perfect holiness as well as immortal blessedness; in a word, "submit yourselves to the righteousness of God" in "Christ, the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth," and you need not, you ought not to doubt the willingness of God to receive, nay, that He does receive you as his children, "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

4. How great is the wickedness, and how inexcusable the folly of those, who refuse to submit themselves unto God! Salvation is offered unto them. All things are made ready for their acceptance. God waits in his Gospel to be their friend. Yet they choose his wrath. They reject Christ. They break away from the arms of the Spirit. Because they love sin too well to give it up, or are too proud to be saved through Christ, they live without God in this world, to perish in the next. O, that they would think of the mercy they despise, the love they reject, the God they provoke, the soul they ruin, and the wrath they must endure!

SERMON CCCCLXXI.

BY REV. GEORGE H. FISHER, D. D.,
PASTOR OF THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH IN BROOME STREET,
NEW YORK.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE PROVED AND ILLUSTRATED.

When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.—GALATIANS, iv. 4.

THE main design of the following discourse is to attest and illustrate a Divine Providence, by means of certain historical facts. It can be shown most conclusively, as it appears to me, that the great self-existent Being, whom we call God, intelligently, powerfully, and wisely controls all human affairs, in their accessions and revolutions, for the accomplishment of his own sublime purposes.

The text chosen for this discourse decidedly intimates the doctrine, that God sent forth his Son, at a time whose fulness, or characteristic appropriateness, had been intentionally sought and prepared, through previous ages and events. If, then, it can be shown that the advent of Christ constituted an august purpose, to

which all the great occurrences of foregoing history had been rendered pointedly subservient, the position I have assumed will be completely sustained.

To show that the advent of Christ did constitute such a purpose, and that the occurrences of history were so subservient, is the argument, in the prosecution of which you are invited now to attend me.

The plan chosen for the discussion is, in the first place, to sketch the Age of Christ, or the political, intellectual, and moral state of the world at that period: and in the second place, to prove that the assemblage of circumstances distinguishing that age, with the advent of the Redeemer at that particular crisis, was an issue directly produced by the power and wisdom of God.

I. I am, first, to sketch to you the Age of Christ, and will begin with its *political* aspect.

1. The tribe of Judah attained to an early and long-continued distinction. The Exode from Egypt, which took place fourteen hundred and eighty-seven years before the time of Christ, was followed by a solemn compact between Jehovah and his delivered people, concluded and ratified at Mount Sinai, by sacrifices and the sprinkling of blood. That compact was the organization of the Theocracy, the most wonderful form of government ever known on earth. Thenceforward this royal tribe enjoyed, through all the changes of the nation, a high preeminence in strength and power, and in the elevation of its rank and honors.

It gave rise, in the person of David, to a race of Hebrew kings, authorized by their covenant, for almost five hundred years: and Judah has never been surpassed, in the wealth and beauty of the country over which he ruled; in the greatness and renown of some of his monarchs; in the splendor of the holy city, his metropolis; in the wisdom and righteousness of his laws; in the excellency of his religion, or in the glory of his arms. Even when suffering the calamities of defeat and captivity,—calamities which overwhelmed the ten tribes, and scattered them through the heathen nations of the East, where they were absorbed and lost, no less entirely than mysteriously,—the sovereignty of this tribe, although eclipsed, was not extinguished. Upon the restoration from the captivity at Babylon, the sceptre and lawgiver were reinstated in their high places, and the administration of justice was again effected according to their national code; and for a long time afterwards their political constitution was held firmly in its seat.

In the meanwhile, another power had risen upon the world, the Roman—having been founded by Romulus, in Italy, seven hundred and thirty years after the Exode; and stretching out its grasp, from its once narrow domain, it seized on all crowns and dominions, to array them around itself, like the stately columns of its majestic temples, to support its own stupendous fabric. And even Judah came at length to bow down before this mighty conqueror.

About fifty-nine years before the birth of our Lord, the victorious Pompey effected the reduction of Syria, the lingering remains of the Grecian monarchy, founded by Philip of Macedon, and established by Alexander, upon the ruins of the Persian empire. And by depriving Antiochus Asiaticus, the last of the Seleucidæ, of his crown and rights, he ended the Greek power in Asia, and degraded that Government to the rank of a Roman province.

At that period, no fewer than twelve kings made their court to this distinguished general, suing for various interests, or protection, through the Roman arms. Among them, Aristobulus, monarch of the Jews, came, with a present of a magnificent curiosity of wrought gold, and solicited his aid, to secure him on the throne, which his usurpation withheld from his elder brother, Hyrcanus.

This event, from the peculiar direction given to it by the guilty suppliant himself, led Pompey to Jerusalem, not as a friend and ally, but as an enemy and a conqueror. He possessed himself of the city, and, after a siege of three months, took the temple, which the followers of the usurper had made their citadel. On the anniversary of the capture of Jerusalem by the armies of Chaldea, ages before, the Roman eagles perched in triumph on the throne of David, once more fallen. The deposed Hyrcanus was restored to the rank of a prince; but he was forbidden to wear a diadem, or to extend the borders of his country beyond their ancient limits. The defeated Aristobulus was carried in chains to Rome, to grace, among a crowd of other noble and royal captives, the triumphal honors decreed to their victor. Judea thus became dependant on a foreign power.

And within a short period it was made the prize for the toil and carnage of the field of battle, when, at length, Herod the Great, a Jewish proselyte, but an Idumean by birth, closed a three-years' war, by entering Jerusalem, wearing the plundered dignities of Judah's princes, in the thirty-third year before Christ was born.

The Roman empire continued to spread out its borders with its arms, until its capital, the city of the seven hills, became the mistress of all lands, or, as in the glowing portraiture of its own poetic genius it might well have been called, the light of nations, the peerless divinity of the earth; and the stately occupant of its throne amassed a dominion, stretching from the Atlantic ocean, on the west, to the Euphrates, on the east; from the Danube and the Rhine, upon the north, to the cataracts of the Nile, and the deserts of Africa, on the south; a dominion which comprehended the entire Mediterranean sea, and all the best part of the then known world.

When the Roman legions were the most triumphant, the Roman power the most extensively recognised, and the Emperor was dignified by the Senate with the title of "August," then it was that the seal of servitude was affixed to the name of Judah. The imperial decree that all the world should be taxed, required this,

among a multitude of other despoiled and subjugated states, to enrol their names, and to swear the oath of fealty. And this decree has come to be celebrated in all after time, by the illustrious fact that, while the measures of compliance had gathered all who were of the house and lineage of David, at their royal city of Bethlehem, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, was born there, amid strangely commingled circumstances of poverty and grandeur, in the four thousandth year of the world.

Subsequently to this period, and when Christ had reached his twelfth year, the dethronement of Archelaus, who, on Herod's death, had obtained Judea as a part of his inheritance, inflicted another severe blow on that declining people. He had been summoned to Rome, to answer the charges of tyranny and mal-administration; and being unable to justify himself, was sentenced to deposition from his principality, and banishment to a foreign land. Judea was then annexed to the imperial province of Syria, under the government of Publius Sulpitius Quirinus, whom St. Luke calls Cyrenius, to whom, together with Coponius, a Roman knight, who was appointed its procurator, it became subordinate. This act abolished her old constitution, thrust out her native princes, smote her independence to the dust, made the people directly tributary to the Emperor, supplanted Jewish laws with the laws of Rome, and invested the power of life and death in a Roman officer. Judea was crushed by the domination of imperial Rome.

2. The state of mind and morals was quite as peculiar as the political condition of things at this period. About the time of the Emperor Augustus, the literature of Rome had reached its highest ascendant, no less than the eagles of the empire; and on this account it has been called, with happy emphasis, the golden age. During the earlier state of comparative barbarism, when the grandeur of the commonwealth was gained and supported through a severe military discipline, and the prowess of an indomitable resolution, mind was bowed down by the oppression of ignorance, and all intellectual distinctions were effectually suppressed by the opinion that study was an unmanly labor. But intercourse with the Greeks, and especially the conquest of that refined people, had introduced a love for the cultivation of genius, for the display of talent, and for an acquaintance with the arts which tend either to improve or embellish life. Men of vast mental powers arose, who placed history and poetry, eloquence and philosophy, upon a high eminence: the learning of all parts of the world was invited to Rome, "and the delicate fruits transplanted from Greece were in their blossom, being cherished by the calmness of the season, and cultivated by the hand of an Emperor." The admired monuments afforded by the scattered fragments and more entire works which have survived the passage of time, have proclaimed to all succeeding ages, that the power and capacities of the human mind were carried well nigh to the highest pitch of secular refinement.

What then were the moral results upon the feelings and characters of men? Did these partake of that unexampled refinement?

When we have accorded to them all their appropriate distinction, in view of their intellectual greatness and their attainments in the sciences, arts, and architecture, we are thrown back upon the conclusion, that in all other respects, the more they were enlightened the more they were vitiated; the more polished they became, the deeper they sank in the abysses of corruption. The deficiencies of their mythology and the deformities of their morals, then, appear more striking in fact, and more painful in character. Their philosophers employed no treasures of learning, their orators no power of eloquence, and their priests no wisdom of precept or example, in animating the people to a virtuous conduct, in teaching the religion of a holy God, or in enforcing any duty to lessen the calamities of mankind. On the other hand their philosophy and their sacred economy abounded in contradictions, taught principles which despoiled the soul, filled the breasts of men with a cruel selfishness, and multiplied polytheism to an enormous extent. Their very doctrines respecting the rewards of virtue and the punishment of vice, after the present life, were better fitted to administer indulgence to iniquity than encouragement to rectitude.

The wisdom, and learning, and brilliancy of the golden age, bowed down in the worship of so poor a god as the personification of every rude and unholy passion, of every boisterous and malignant evil. Jupiter and Mars, Bacchus and Venus, are so many names for cruelty and oppression, intemperance and vice. Humanity sickens at the details which an examination of their mythological relations discloses; while, as to the scenes enacted before their shrines and called religious rites, St. Paul has said that for their shame a Christian could not even name them. Yet it was for such divinities those magnificent temples were constructed, which are still the wonder of men, and seem to stand as if to perpetuate the memory of the *degradation* to which they ministered. The consequence could only be to bring every imagination to evil, as with the spell of an enchanting delusion—to enslave every mind to the power of selfish interests and depraved passions, and to produce an universal corruption of manners, discovering itself in the impunity of the most flagitious crimes, and in practices of the most shameless atrocity.

Let us now turn to the Jews. The fall of their national independence had not caused an entire suppression of the forms of civil and religious institutions; the exercise of their sacred rites, particularly, being permitted. These last indeed had undergone but few essential alterations, for, notwithstanding their extreme degeneracy in morals and the perverting power of their traditions, the law of Moses yet continued to command an outward observance and respect.

They still adorned their ritual with costly appliances and innumerable victims, but it was almost utterly divorced from the solemnity of feeling and the devotional awe it once inspired. The design of its institution had been to remind the Hebrew worshipper of his multiplied obligations to the God of Heaven, to proclaim the defection and guilt of man, and to unite the hope of pardon and acceptance to him who, by the sacrifice of himself, should purge the sins of the people. But its spirituality had been absorbed in the strifes and heresies of malignant sects, in the calamities of their political oppressions, and above all in the belief that the expected Messiah would come to be a temporal prince and a magnificent leader, who would raise up and ascend their fallen throne, and by the conquests of mighty armies, avenge their wrongs upon the hated Roman, and make their land the glory and their sceptre the supremacy of all nations.

It is charged by Josephus, their own historian, that the chief places among the people and among the priesthood, were occupied by men, who had reached them through bribery and violence, and maintained them by the most flagitious acts and abandoned immoralities. When authority was the associate of venality, when learning was coupled with dissoluteness, when the priesthood was infamous for licentiousness, when sanctity and wisdom were the co-partners of dissensions and hypocrisy, what fate could remain for the religion and morals of the people at large, but to be sunken in darkness, errors, and corruption. They were ignorant of God and divine things, and reduced their temple service to a heartless series of sacrifices and ablutions. Hence arose the fearful iniquity and endless seditions, robberies, and extortions, which armed against them the justice of God and the vengeance of man.

From this sketch of the Age of Christ, it appears that it was distinguished by three peculiarly remarkable facts.

The first was, that of the two most extraordinary kingdoms ever erected among men—the one, the Jewish, from the midst of unrivalled greatness had fallen into a declension, which no circumstances could arrest; and the other, the Roman, had risen to an eminence to which no civil grandeur remained to be added.

The second was, that the Roman people, in one respect exhibited to the world an example of the surpassing splendors in which the human mind may array its intellectual powers; and in another, of the immeasurable corruptions of which its moral faculties have been rendered capable. The third fact was, that Judea groaned under all the miseries of relentless oppression, its religion borne down by the weight of desecration and superstition, and its morals laid waste by the introduction of Roman luxury accompanied by the vices of that licentious people; a condition whose degradation is deepened by the circumstance, that the Jewish nation had been peculiarly separated from an idolatrous world to be the depository of the oracles of God.

Now, in view of that great assemblage of circumstances, with the advent of Christ, at that especial crisis, I raise a question: Were these facts the results of a capricious contingency, or the ordering of a Divine Providence, equally intelligent, powerful, and wise?

I affirm the *latter*; and the argument constitutes the second part of this discourse.

II. The objects of Messiah's mission were, to enlarge and establish the doctrines of that holy religion, already proclaimed by patriarchs and prophets; to present to the world an example of the sublime morality essential to the Gospel, and to bring in an everlasting righteousness, through the atonement of the cross.

Reason recognises it as an original axiom, that he who claims to be the great Teacher and Saviour of mankind, must be set apart to the office by a singular personal and official distinction, appropriate to his work not only, but calculated to attract and engage the attention of the world to himself.—Reason holds it to be equally self-evident that it is essential to so extraordinary a character, that he should present himself and his mediation to the regards of the world, at a period when by all its circumstances, it is best situated to weigh his doctrines, to examine his religion, and to investigate his authenticity. These propositions, with the second of which we are now concerned, were met by the Messiah in the most entire manner, both in the facts of his personal history and in the time of his advent.

That assemblage of civil and moral, of intellectual and religious circumstances, which we have just noted as distinguishing the Age of Christ in so remarkable a manner, constituted it above any that preceded or has followed it, and in all respects, the ripe, full age for his appearance. And now to show that this was definitely designed, and positively produced by divine Providence, I appeal

1st. To the state of religion. During a long course of time, mankind had been allowed to test, and that upon a large scale, the application of sacred economies of every name and variety. The results of the whole, both separately and unitedly, exhibited the necessity of divine interposition, and the value of the institutions such an interposition should afford. Of these economies the two most celebrated, were the mythology of the Greeks and Romans, and the ritual of Moses; of the former of which the principle was idolatry, and of the latter, the revelation of the true God.

The term idol signifies in general a figure or representation, and in a religious sense an image, picture, or symbol of the Deity. And idolatry is the homage paid to such images or symbols, although their first use professed no more than a design to employ them as means of the divine worship. Its origin is assignable to an antiquity so remote as to be dated, most probably, within a few years from the time of the deluge. Those descendants of Noah who were called Cushites, under the direction of Nimrod, the

earliest political ruler of whom we have any knowledge, laid the first foundation of a state government, or national dominion, in the year of the world seventeen hundred and fifty-seven, and just a century after the flood. To the boldness and enterprise, to the ingenuity and art of this people, the world seems to be indebted for many influences affecting its condition and history, even down to the present time. And their inventive genius is thought to have introduced this extraordinary perversion of religion during the very life of Noah, whose piety and preservation had connected him in such unparalleled relations with the true God.

It sprang from the moral depravity of our fallen nature : that profound enmity against God and goodness which carnality always cherishes. And accordingly, wherever and however it has been found, its debasing and fatal tendencies have been manifest in the wretchedness of the people, in the want of all just sense of moral rectitude, and in the prevailing cruelty, sensuality, and enormities. When the confusion of tongues smote the proud builders of Babel, and scattered the Cushites abroad, this new and terrible evil spread itself out in every direction from its birth-place, on the plains of Shinar. Whether we follow them in their wanderings and their isolated settlements, in the power and grandeur of the empire founded at Babylon, into Egypt or Canaan, into Greece or Italy, we shall behold the perpetuating of their idolatry, and the overwhelming of the worship of the true God and the traces of the true religion. Prosperity hastened its progress, and reverses offered no check to the growing superstition. Power spread over it the mightiness of a public patronage, and a defeat in war inflicted no disaster on its enchanting delusions. Its history presents many changes in its aspect, from its rudeness in a barbarous state, to its refinement among a polished people ; yet its leading principles and its practical results are one and indivisible, depraved ignorance and ruinous corruptions. Even in the state of most magnificent elevation to which it ever reached, the classic mythology of Greece and Rome, we have already seen that it was wholly incapable of any other effect than languor and stupefaction—while its very grandeur revealed its utter insufficiency, and as well, the absurdity of the popular fables and superstitions.

This, then, is the great doctrine taught by the state of Gentile religion in the Age of Christ, that the world by its own wisdom knew not God. Could fallen man ever find the way to God ; could the energies of reason ever throw off the miserable vanities of heathenism, unassisted by heavenly teaching, that must have been the time, and they the men to accomplish so vast and good a work, when the philosophy and intellectual refinement of the Romans had ascended to their zenith. But the most enlightened teachers, involved in absolute uncertainty in any attempt they may have made to correct their overgrown evils, were confounded amid their own chimeras and subtilities. And although surround-

ed by the splendors of creation, manifesting an eternal power and divinity, they failed to arrive at any satisfactory knowledge of a Godhead, or any settled conclusion whether they should survive the wreck of nature, and live beyond the grave. Hence they either sank down in helpless imbecility among the follies of their idolatry; or, laughing at portents and omens, at Pluto's kingdom and Elysian fields, yielded to the tendencies which drew them on to atheism.

The ritual of Moses, tracing its origin to revelations and inspiration of the most High God, running parallel with the defection of the race—partially unfolded in the call and covenant of Abraham, was fully established in the divine legation of the prophet, by whose name it is distinguished. It gradually ascended from the limitations of a single promise and a single sacrifice, until it stood forth unrivalled at once in structure, in sublimity, and in truth.

But its high estate it did not keep. From a variety of causes, it lost much of its piety; it became so secularized, that the true character of the Messiah, whom it shadowed forth, was lost to view; and so corrupted, that the great objects of its own spirit, and of his mission, were almost wholly misunderstood. Indeed, multitudes of chief men and rulers openly adopted the opinions of the Sadducees, a system of inveterate infidelity. And even in Palestine, the land of promise, and so long the land of wonders, the state of things had become yet more deplorable than in the heathen countries with which it was associated. There, where the glory of the true and only church of God on earth had shone forth in all the majesty of the divine presence; where their rites and institutions had been more rational and sublime, as well as more costly and splendid, than in the public service of any other nation; where the inspired instructions of holy prophets, and the interposition of an Almighty wisdom, had built up safeguards around the altars of religion,—even *there*, successive apostacies had weakened the power of faith, and spread an almost universal impiety upon the souls of men.

In reference to their miserable condition, we may call to mind the numerous passages of the Evangelists, in which the great Teacher has described the people as "lost sheep," and their leaders as "blind guides," and denounced their fanaticism and hypocrisy, their ostentation and spiritual pride, their wickedness and infidelity. We may listen also to Paul, declaring that, through their notorious vices, their religion had become an object of calumny and satire among the heathen nations; "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles, through you." And we may read his delineation of their speculative theology and practical atheism—of their prevailing degeneracy, and contemptuous neglect of all virtue, when he says, in his epistle to Titus, "they profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and unto every good work reprobate."

From these views of the state of both Gentile and Jewish religion, it is clearly seen that, on the one side, mankind had put to the test the most accomplished mythology they could invent, and had studied human duty and human happiness, in the strong light of an unexampled mental meridian, and that the power of idolatry to corrupt, and the insufficiency of philosophy to restore, were fully manifested; and that, on the other side, the total incapacity of a system of splendid types and imposing ceremonials to preserve and to purify the human soul, when that system, by voluntary and long-continued faithlessness, was divorced from the truth, spirituality, and exaltedness, with which its divine founder had invested it, was proved with equal certainty.

This then was a *marked juncture*. This was a "fulness of time" for the appearance of a divine Teacher, who would introduce a pure system of morals, and erect the institutions of a wise and an enduring religion. This was a time when the contrast would be most prominent; when men were prepared, by the state of learning, to search his character, to examine his evidences, to compare his doctrines, and, through jealousy, scepticism, and inquisitiveness, to be preserved from imposition. And it was at *this* very juncture, just at this fulness of time, that Christ came to be the teacher and Saviour of men.

Had the Incarnation taken place in an earlier age, it must have been unattended by the evidence of that combination of circumstances, so strikingly demonstrative of its utility and necessity, while the prevalence of ignorance would have precluded all adequate investigation of its claims. Had it occurred in a later period, the wars and divisions which soon after broke up the peace and the kingdoms of the world, and brought learning to a deep declension, although they were instrumental in diffusing among the nations a knowledge of the cross, would have proved highly unfavorable to the objects of the Advent.

Now, to what conclusion, I ask, does all this tend, if not to show that a Divine Providence, pursuing its own great purposes, inspected and controlled all those moral and intellectual circumstances, infallibly conducting them to their remarkable crisis, and, with purpose aforethought, sending Him forth, who is the Christ, the Son of God? The character of the Age, and the character of the Messiah, having so singular an adaptation each to the other, although in themselves so vastly different, could never have arisen from fortuitous occurrences. The "fulness of the time" unanswerably argues the design proposed, and the accomplishment wrought, by a wise and powerful Providence.

2ndly. I appeal, in the second place, to the political state of the world, which discloses the purpose and superintendence of Divine Providence, in a manner still clearer and more impressive. In this part of my argument I shall rely on two grand prophetic announcements, which, through a long succession of years, associat-

ed the Age of Christ with the occurrence of two great national crises, assigning them as, at once, the period and the evidence of this Advent.

(1.) The first of these prophecies was delivered in Egypt, by the patriarch Jacob, when, shortly before his death, he predicted to his sons what should befall their descendants in after ages. The holy seer foretold the exalted character and the legislative and regal dignities to which the posterity of Judah should attain. And he added the impressive and solemn assurance, that "the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come:" or, in other words, that the time when Judah's regal authority should fail, and his political existence should be stricken with the pangs of dissolution, should be also the time when Shiloh, the prosperous author of salvation, should appear.

But where is the tribe of Judah now? By what proofs of genealogy shall it be identified? And where, through so many generations, have been the pomp and rule of Judah's royal line? We have already seen that the kingdom was borne down by Roman power, above fifty years before the Advent, so that at the birth of Christ, a feeble glimmer only of their departing glory continued to linger around the sceptre once wielded by David and his successors; and when, in his twelfth year, the dethronement of Archelaus was followed by the incorporation of the country with the province of Syria, Judah's sovereignty was finally extinguished, and the lawgiver had departed from between his feet for ever—Shiloh had come, and Jacob's prediction was fulfilled.

Nor was it long from thence when Jerusalem sent up, from tower and from palace, the blaze of a thousand fires, to light the conquering hosts of Rome on their work of ravage and destruction. Then the fallen altars, the demolished walls, the smouldering ruins of its once gorgeous and solemn temple, became the irrefragable evidences that everything which that dispensation could effect had been accomplished, and that its glory had gone down, never to reascend. It was only seventy years from the Incarnation, that the fall of that famed and proud metropolis buried beneath its ruins the last hope of Judah's civil polity; and the Jewish state, overwhelmed with guilt and carnage, disappeared from among the governments of the earth.

(2.) The second of these prophetic annunciations is contained in Daniel's inspired description and interpretation of the Chaldean monarch's forgotten dream.—In the visions of the night, a symbolical representation of his own empire, and its succeeding monarchies, arose to the view of Nebuchadnezzar, in the form of a gorgeous image of a man, with a head of gold, breast and arms of silver, body and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet partly of iron and partly of clay. This image stood before him in terrific brightness, until a stone, cut by unseen hands, from a mountain

side, fell upon its feet, and laid it in ruins. But the stone itself seemed to dash on over the crushed and scattered fragments of gold and silver, iron and clay, swelling out its own mighty proportions, until it filled the whole earth. The prophet assured the king that his own should be succeeded by empires of lesser brilliancy, but of broader power, until, in the days of the last, the God of heaven would set up a new kingdom, which, in the magnitude of its authority, and in the splendor of its institutions, should rise above, and endure beyond all others.

The monarchies typified by that image were, successively, the Chaldean, denoted by the gold; the Persian, by the silver; the Grecian, by the brass; and the Roman, by the iron and clay. And the kingdom symbolized by the stone, is the mediatorial sovereignty of Jesus Christ. The time of the introduction of this new kingdom is pointed out by the admixture of iron and clay, and by the circumstance that the stone, which destroyed the image, fell upon the feet, which were composed of those substances.

The Roman empire arose in its order, and, having triumphed over all that preceded or opposed, it ascended, as we have seen, to an exalted majesty and dominion; a majesty distinguished for its intrinsic lustre, and as having wrought the changes which issued in ultimate dismemberment. It was a moment of the deepest interest to the Roman people, to the predicted kingdom of Christ, and to the world, when Julius Cæsar clothed himself with absolute power, by merging the consular dignity in that of a perpetual dictatorship. Rome, with the forms of government which had prevailed, or been countenanced under her old constitution, was not the Rome whose dominion was sketched as one of the monarchies of the prophetic image. And this bold and bloody soldier became, unwittingly, the instrument of preparing the world for the resistless triumphs of the Prince of Peace, by introducing such changes in the Roman state, as laid the foundations of that imperial greatness, which ranked it among the imperial powers which had preceded. It was upon suspicion of his high ambition to be proclaimed a king, that he was so cruelly assassinated in the Senate-house. But this event brought no new direction into the current of affairs. The power and eminence which he had won, and the dignity to which he aspired, had a real and, to other interests, a necessary existence; and although wrenched from his own grasp, they became at length the possession of his nephew, Cæsar Octavianus, who, with Lepidus and Mark Antony, as Triumvirs, exercised despotic sway over the provinces of the republic, avenged that bloody conspiracy, by the total defeat of Brutus and Cassius, its chief perpetrators, on the plains of Macedon, a few years prior to the time of our Lord; and soon afterwards, having deprived Lepidus of his command, and conquered Mark Antony, he raised himself to the supreme power, ending the existence of the triumvirate and the republic together. Accepting the titles conferred by the Se-

nate, he took the name of "Imperator Cæsar Augustus," and henceforth the authority of the Emperor was fully established.

This was the period when the great crisis of Roman affairs had occurred; when the erection of a throne had given them a new and imperial grandeur, constituting them what the prophetic dream had imaged, the fourth great monarchy, and when the first and stateliest of their monarchs had occupied his royal seat for twenty-seven years, it was at this period that Christ appeared among men, to execute his own stupendous, undertaking, the mediatorial government of the world.

The establishment of the imperial power upon the ruins of both patrician and plebeian factions, imparted to their name its most resplendent majesty, and to their city its most magnificent grandeur. And so also did it, whether by tolerance or persecution, prepare the way for the wide diffusion and the solid perpetuity of the Christian faith. Still it was the great crisis in their political existence, and decay was already commissioned to its work.

During the reign of Augustus Cæsar, under which Christ was born, the empire stood firmly, as on legs of iron; but during that of Tiberius, his successor, under which Christ was crucified, its glory began to wane, and the Roman power stood upon the feet of iron and clay. In the seventeenth year from the birth of Christ the Emperor Augustus died, and the golden gave place to the silver age. From this beginning of decline in its literature, splendor, and power, it came, in a few centuries, in its varying fortunes, to be a monument of earthly instability and the frailty of human greatness. At length it received a mortal blow from the hand of Constantine the Great. Soon after his accession to the throne, in the three hundred and sixth year of the Christian era, he removed the seat of the imperial court from Rome to Byzantium, since called Constantinople. Early in the fifth century, it was divided into two distinct sovereignties, of which the Western, under Honorius, had its seat of government at Ravenna, in the north of Italy, and the Eastern, under Arcadius, at Constantinople. The former subsisted until the year four hundred and seventy-six, when Odoacer, king of the Heruli, took Rome from Augustulus, a feeble and the last representative of the stately Cæsars. And the latter, known also as the Greek empire, was overthrown by the conquests of the Turks, who, under Mahomet the Second, made themselves masters of Constantinople, in the year fourteen hundred and fifty-three. At the present time, and for many centuries past, the kingdoms of Europe and the East occupy the territory over which the Roman Empire once extended its haughty dominion. The God of heaven had set up the new kingdom, and Nebuchadnezzar's dream was realized.

The dignity of the Cæsars, and the lustre of the Roman name, have grown dim by the lapse of time; their crown and their dominion, as of the other monarchies that dream prefigured, having

long since fallen to the inheritance of other names. But that new kingdom, the sovereignty of Christ, built on deep and strong foundations, has gathered permanency around its own institutions, from prosperous governments and from shattered sceptres, and is filling the world with the splendor of its triumphs; and successive generations will render to it their honor, admiration, and love, until its allegiance shall be acknowledged by all lands, languages, and people.

Now, with two such predictions before us, and with the history of their fulfilment, their most extraordinary fulfilment, in our hands, I ask, can there be a doubt that the accessions of human affairs are controlled by a Divine Providence; controlled agreeably to the arrangements and objects of a great and wise plan of events?

The first was made by Jacob, seventeen hundred years before the time of its accomplishment, and related to the extinction of the political being of a people, his own descendants, who were then few in number, and were dwellers in Egypt, a land of strangers, to which famine had driven them from their own country: assigning that extinction as at once the period and the evidence of the Saviour's advent. The other was uttered in the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, six hundred years before its completion, and announced the decline of a kingdom, then in the zenith of its magnificence, to make way for its successors, of different names and powers, which were to subsist in their order until the Saviour should appear, and no longer.

At length one came, who claimed and proved himself to be the Saviour. At the time of his appearing, all the political events pointed out in both prophecies had passed in their succession, or were still in their existence; and no aftertimes have embodied those events, either in whole or in part. Could contingency, could chance thus originate and conduct the affairs of a single nation, and of all the great nations of the world, and through so many ages, concluding them all in that one grand, wondrous, gracious event, the Incarnation of Christ? No event was disjointed from its co-partner; no branch of the design failed of its execution; no period in the whole series of ages forgot to render its contribution to the stupendous result. The radii of a circle do not converge with greater certainty at its centre; the dawning of day does not grow up with a stronger assurance to the blaze of noon, than did the accomplishment of these predictions combine, in the Age of Christ, that assemblage of political facts, which so remarkably distinguished it, thereby constituting it what a Divine Providence had ordained that it should become.

That Christ came to be the Teacher and Saviour of men, and that he came at a period marked by such extraordinary intellectual and religious circumstances, must be held to furnish incontrovertible evidence of the definite design and controlling power of Providence.

But when it is added, that the Age of Christ stands attested by the accomplishment of predictions, which covered the rise and splendor, the decline and fall of the Jewish government and the Roman empire, the definite design and the controlling power of the Divine Providence have been demonstrated.

I have thus endeavored to prove and illustrate God's most holy providence, in overruling all human affairs for the accomplishment of his own sublime purposes; and it has been shown that the advent of Christ constituted an august purpose, to which all the great occurrences of foregoing history had been rendered pointedly subservient.

To deny the doctrine which I have thus defended, is to affirm that plotting villany, intriguing ambition, insatiable wickedness, and desolating wars, relieved by spare admixtures of moral and political integrity, virtue, and peace, have followed each other, in rapid and angry succession, only to result, without any design, but merely by contingency, in erecting, in the midst of our wretched and guilty world, a system of morals, order, charity, blessing, and salvation, not only beyond the power of the cultivated intellect of the golden, or any other age, to institute, but even to conceive. Now, if we could force our minds to the belief of so monstrous an anomaly, as such an affirmation must involve, still the belief would be utterly useless, being inapplicable to any pleasing or important object. But the doctrine in the illustration of which you have accompanied me, beside being commended to our faith by the clearest evidence, is beneficial in the highest sense and degree. It enables us to trace the legitimate connexion between cause and effect: it reduces to order and harmony much that, without its application, must appear to be a chaos of things: it saves from perverted judgment and painful disappointment, by establishing a higher standard of estimate than the mere expedients of political science, or the insulated interests of common life and its pursuits: it renders a knowledge of the near or remote past tributary, with greater or less directness, to a sound judgment of the nature or probable tendencies and issues of existing events, and of the plans of duty required by the scenes in which we may be engaged, the benefactions which we may enjoy, or the troubles through which we may pass, whether in private or in public relations.

In fine, it will conduct the reasonings which may be instituted upon the authentic facts of history, to the attainment of sterling and practical truth. The doctrine of Divine Providence is the true philosophy of history, of which we should never lose sight, when we look over its general records, or search into its particular details, whether civil or sacred. That doctrine teaches that the power which communicates motion to the complex machinery of mortal affairs, and controls all its actions, is the purpose of the sublime Jehovah, in favor of the church and kingdom of the blessed Jesus,—a mediatorial sovereignty, to which his incarnation and atonement have imparted an imperishable grandeur.